

THE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

"ADDRESSING VETERANS ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY"

Information on Veterans Affairs Data Security

In May 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) learned that identifying information on millions of veterans was stolen from a data analyst who had taken the information home on a laptop computer and external hard drive without authorization. The data included names, social security numbers, birth dates of veterans and spouses, as well as disability ratings, excluding health records and financial information.

Even though it is unlikely the perpetrators targeted the items for the data, the appropriate law enforcement agencies, including FBI and the VA Inspector General's Office have launched full-scale investigations in the matter.

The VA is taking all possible steps to protect and inform our veterans. While no action may be necessary, if you are aware of suspicious activity regarding your personal information, there may be steps you may take to protect against possible identity theft. The VA has also teamed up with the Federal Trade Commission and has a Web site – www.firstgov.gov with information on this matter, or you can call **1-800-FED-INFO** (1-800-333-4636) from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. (EDT) Monday through Saturday as long as needed.

Be aware of any phone calls, e-mails, and other communication from individuals claiming to be from the VA or other official sources that may ask for your personal information or ask for verification of same. The VA and other legitimate government organizations will not ask for this type of personal information. If this happens to you, please report this to the VA at **1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636)**, as soon as possible.

The Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) wants all our veterans to be fully aware of the potential risk that this incident could cause, but have received any evidence to date that your protected data has been misused. Since the VA does not have current addresses on all affected individuals, the VAC wants to make sure that all veterans have access to the Web site specified above that may help answer any questions that you may have.

We hope that this method of communication will help reach as many Veterans as possible and pray that this unfortunate situation will never happen again.

Erik Frederick, Chair
Veterans Affairs Commission